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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 SANAA 001373

SIPDIS

RIYADH PLEASE PASS U/S BOLTON PARTY

E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/15/2013

TAGS: [PARM](#) [PREL](#) [OTRA](#) [OVIP](#) [YM](#) [COUNTER TERRORISM](#)

SUBJECT: SCENESETTER FOR UNDER SECRETARY BOLTON'S VISIT TO YEMEN

Classified By: CHARGE ALAN G. MISENHEIMER FOR REASONS 1.5 (B) AND (D)

1. (C) You are the most senior State Department official to visit Yemen since Secretary Baker came in late 1990. The ROYG thus recognizes your visit as an important opportunity to continue building the positive bilateral relations that have evolved in the aftermath of the Cole and 9/11 attacks, so your brief stay in Yemen should be productive. Our post-9/11 CT cooperation with Yemen has achieved important successes, and President Saleh has shown resolve; but your visit forces the Yemenis to focus on areas of the relationship that are difficult for them, particularly SCUDs and cooperation with North Korea. Your discussions with Defense Minister Aliwa and, especially, FM Qirbi will advance the U.S. agenda on those issues, and on Article 98. This cable follows up your discussion with AMB Hull in Washington early this month.

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Yemen and North Korea  
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2. (C) The Yemenis have no ideological affinity for the DPRK, but like to buy cheap. Of course the question of why a country like Yemen -- among the world's 25 poorest, with annual per capita income around \$400 -- would buy a useless weapons system like the SCUD (or Russian MIGs for that matter) at any price is often posed by international donors, and Yemen has no convincing answer. The 11/02 interdiction of the So San with its cargo of SCUD-Bs underscored such questions and prompted several donors (particularly the Japanese) to suspend aid until the ROYG offered assurance that those SCUDs would be the last.

3. (C) Those assurances, conveyed in similar terms to both Japan and the USG, fall short of the simple and categorical language we sought to elicit. The most recent Yemeni statement on this -- a 3/5/03 letter from Aliwa -- stated that existing contracts with the DPRK for spares/maintenance, as well as construction of a naval port near Hodeidah, would be implemented. We have seen no recent indication of movement on either, and have strongly urged the Yemenis to refrain from both.

4. (C) The ROYG has invited the USG to propose an affordable alternative to the DPRK. We have urged the Rumanians (the best established of the East Europeans in Yemen) to use their extensive port-building experience to undercut the DPRK. They are interested, but have bad memories of unpaid bills for construction here in the early 90's. AMB Hull has discussed with you the possibility of dangling expected supplemental FMF as assistance toward responsible military procurement.

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Article 98  
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5. (C) U.S. military assistance is vital for Yemen, so our leverage on the ICC/Article 98 issue is considerable. The fact that other Arab states have taken the plunge on Article 98 is also an important consideration for the Yemenis, who are hesitant to step ahead of their Gulf neighbors on any potentially sensitive issue. The ROYG has signed, but not ratified, the Rome Statute; and we have ensured that the Yemeni leadership is aware that ratification without an Article 98 agreement in place would precipitate a cut-off of FMF.

6. (C) The ROYG put off consideration of an Article 98 agreement for many months in the run-up to the April 27 parliamentary elections. Since then we have worked the issue hard with the MFA, which has been responsive. FM Qirbi is interested in pursuing an exchange of diplomatic notes based on the Egyptian precedent, and we have encouraged this. President Saleh's approval is required, and we believe Qirbi is hoping for presidential authorization to proceed in time for your visit.

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Humanitarian Demining  
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17. (C) You will pay a brief visit to Yemen's National Mine Action Committee. With U.S. guidance, the ROYG began a humanitarian demining program in 1998. Sixty percent of all marked areas have been cleared of mines and UXO, including 10 out of 14 "high impact" areas. Despite Yemen's poverty, the program is widely recognized as one of the best managed and most successful in the world.

18. (C) There is an issue here. The USG has been the largest contributor to the program, but FY03 NADR funds -- \$750,000 -- have not yet been released as the June 30 deadline looms. The program provides humanitarian benefit to the rural poor, and has helped anchor bilateral CT cooperation.

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Security of Radioactive Materials  
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19. (C) Yemen's National Atomic Energy Commission -- led by U.S.-educated Moustafa Bahran -- is surprisingly active and supportive of U.S. positions in international fora. Bahran's main initiative is a proposal to enhance the physical security of radiological materials. The Republic of Yemen, in cooperation with the United States and the EU, co-drafted and co-sponsored the final resolution in the 2002 IAEA conference on preventing the use of radioactive materials for terror. Bahran looks forward to meeting you.

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110. (C) Foreign Minister Qirbi  
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In his second term as Foreign Minister, Dr. Abu Bakr al-Qirbi (a physician by background) has worked to advance Yemen's return to a responsible foreign policy, although he is not inclined to take bold steps that might alienate Arab or Muslim opinion. Both he and Saleh were cautious in public expressions of opposition to Operation Iraqi Freedom, and Qirbi privately told us many times he welcomed the removal of Saddam Hussein. Qirbi has strongly endorsed the Israeli-Palestinian Road Map and publicly praised President Bush for launching the initiative. He is UK-educated and speaks fluent English.

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111. (C) Defense Minister Aliwa  
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Major General Abdullah Ali Aliwa has served both as a soldier and as the civilian governor of a poor province. He is anxious to strengthen military cooperation with the U.S. He does not take the lead on international policy issues, however, and will defer to the Minister of Foreign Affairs on Article 98 and, to a lesser degree, cooperation with North Korea. He may raise the ROYG's program to buy back MANPADS as an indicator of Yemen's CT commitment. He speaks limited English and will prefer to converse in Arabic.  
MISENHEIMER